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LETTERS
ON THE
CALL AND QUALIFICATIONS
OF
MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL,
AND ON
THE APOSTOLIC CHARACTER AND SUPERIOR
ADVANTAGES OF
THE ITINERANT MINISTRY.

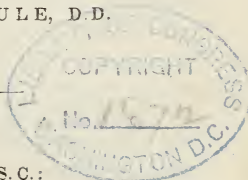
BY THE
REV. WILLIAM BEAUCHAMP,
FOR MANY YEARS AN EMINENT MINISTER IN THE METHODIST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

WITH A PREFACE BY THE
REV. BISHOP SOULE, D.D.

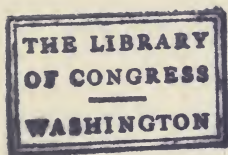
CHARLESTON, S. C.:

PUBLISHED BY JOHN EARLY,
FOR THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH.

1849.



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PREFACE.

THE Author of the following Letters, the Rev. WILLIAM BEAUCHAMP, was born in Kent county, state of Delaware, on the 26th day of April, 1772. From his early childhood he manifested an extraordinary desire and capacity to acquire knowledge; and, in the attainment of it, he met and overcame many difficulties which would have discouraged ordinary minds. With very little aid, except from such books as he could obtain, he acquired a critical knowledge of the English grammar, was a proficient in the Latin and Greek languages, and an able critic in the Hebrew.

He was no ordinary proficient in most of the general branches of science; but especially in the various departments of mathematics his mind was clear and comprehensive, and his method of communicating the knowledge of whatever could be measured or numbered, was peculiarly felicitous. His course of mathematical studies had disciplined

his mind to close logical reasoning on every subject which he investigated ; but it was in the development and defence of the doctrines of the Revelation of God, and especially in the lucid and powerful manner in which he exhibited the evidences of the truth of that Revelation, that his intellectual strength was most clearly manifested. Heresy and infidelity trembled when these were the subjects of his pulpit discourses.

His piety was sentimental, deep, and uniform. He appeared to be under an abiding conviction that he was living and labouring for eternity, and his constant aim in his Christian experience and practice, and in his ministerial labours, appeared to be to transcribe into his own character, all the transcribable perfections of the "Captain of his Salvation," and thus to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." With him there was "no time for mirth or trifling here." No vain, or idle, or senseless conversation occupied his time in any circle in which he moved ; but rather such as tended to edification in experimental and practical godliness. The various relative duties enjoined by the Gospel Revelation, were subjects on which he dwelt with peculiar clearness and successful application, both in the pulpit and in his pastoral and social visitations.

What a blessing would it be to the church and to the world, if all those who profess to be ministers of Christ, and pastors of his flock, would imitate such an excellent example !

About the sixteenth year of his age, Mr. Beau-

champ's family removed from Delaware and settled in Western Virginia. He began to preach when about nineteen years old. In the twenty-first year of his age he left his paternal home, and travelled a circuit under the direction of the Presiding Elder. In 1794 he was admitted on trial in the travelling connexion, and appointed to the Allegheny Circuit, which he travelled two years. In 1796 he was stationed in Pittsburgh. In 1797 in the city of New York with George Roberts and Joshua Wells. In 1798 in Boston. In 1799 in Provincetown; and in 1800 on Nantucket. In this station his health, which had been feeble from his early youth, so declined, as to render him unable to perform the arduous labours of an itinerant preacher; and at the ensuing Conference, he asked and obtained a location. He remained on the island of Nantucket until 1807, employing his time, as his feeble health would permit, in teaching; especially the science of navigation; and in assisting the stationed preachers in the labours of the ministry.

It was in this station, in 1803, that I first formed a personal acquaintance with this excellent minister of the Gospel of Christ. This year I record among the most important and profitable years of my early ministry, chiefly on account of the benefits derived from the instructions and holy examples of this great and good man.

In 1807 he removed from Nantucket and settled in Western Virginia, near the residence of his father. In 1811 he published his "Essays on the Truth of

the Christian Religion." This work was happily adapted to the spirit of the times, and was doubtless an efficient auxiliary in checking the progress of infidelity in the western country, and in the establishment of weak and wavering believers in the conviction that they had not followed "cunningly devised fables," when they accredited the truth of the Christian Revelation. Works on the same subject, of less real merit, and far less calculated for general usefulness, have passed through several editions, while this valuable publication is almost forgotten.

In 1816, Mr. Beauchamp commenced the publication of a monthly periodical, in Chilicothe, Ohio, with the title of "THE WESTERN CHRISTIAN MONITOR." One of the chief designs of the author in issuing this monthly, was to check the progress and counteract the deleterious influence of the Pelagian and Arian heresies which, unhappily, had prevailed to a considerable extent in the West at that time. And although the work was discontinued at the close of the first year, chiefly in consequence of Mr. Beauchamp's declining health, it proved an efficient agent in removing those false and dangerous doctrines from the church. His "Commentary on the Articles of Religion of the Methodist Episcopal Church" is worthy of all commendation.

Towards the close of 1817, Mr. Beauchamp removed with his family to the state of Illinois, where he continued, diffusing the blessings of science and religion as his health would permit, till 1822, when,

his health having somewhat improved, he was, at his own request, readmitted into the travelling connexion, in the Missouri Conference, and stationed in the city of St. Louis.

From the Conference held in October 1823, he was appointed to the Indiana district, which then contained eleven circuits. At this Conference he was elected a delegate to the General Conference, which met in Baltimore, in May 1824. The high esteem in which he was held by that body of ministers, is well known to many who are still living.

On his return from Baltimore he resumed the labours of his district, though his health was obviously declining, and attended three quarterly meetings, and was on his way to the fourth, when his old complaint, an affection of the liver, returned, and progressed with alarming symptoms. He continued sinking under the disease for about six weeks. The best medical skill which the country afforded proved unavailing, and on the 7th day of October, 1824, he "finished his course," in perfect peace and triumph, at the residence of Mr. Joseph Peck, in Paoli, Orange county, Indiana.

At the session of the Conference which commenced on the 23d of October, about two weeks after Mr. Beauchamp's death, a sermon was preached at the request of the Conference on the solemn and deeply affecting occasion, from 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the

faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day." The scene was peculiarly solemn and affecting. The preachers, and the numerous friends of Mr. Beauchamp who were in attendance on the occasion, felt, deeply felt, that a great man had fallen in our Israel.

In looking back to that eventful period, reflections mingled with sorrow and joy are awakened in my mind. How many of the ministers who were in attendance at that Conference, and sorrowed for the departure of our beloved Beauchamp, have since fallen asleep in the silence of death, and, we trust, followed him to the habitation of the Saints in light—to the Paradise of God! Among these are two of my venerable colleagues, M'Kendree and Roberts. And then an Armstrong, a Strange, a Green, a Walker, a Thompson, a Dew, a M'Allister, an Edmonson, and a Wiley, with other younger labourers in the vineyard of their Lord. These all "rest from their labours, and their works do follow them."

Mr. Beauchamp, shortly before his death, and when he was fully conscious that "his departure was at hand," gave direction that a number of manuscripts, the production of his pen in the last few years of his life, should be committed to me, and be subject to my disposal. Upon examination, I found that most of these papers were in an unfinished state, and were manifestly designed to be revised and enlarged by the author; but whether it

was his intention to publish them, I have never been able to ascertain. The only manuscript put into my hands in a finished state is, the Letters on the "Eternal Sonship of Christ." No sermons were among the papers deposited with me, as the writer of a biographical notice of Mr. B., in the eighth volume of the Methodist Magazine, informs his readers. His "Essay on Divine Law" was not half finished, according to his design, as is obvious from his introductory remarks. The "Essay on Slavery" was still further from being completed. Indeed, it was little more than commenced. But in both of these, especially the former, there is a clear developement of a powerful mind, disciplined to profound investigation, and close logical reasoning. The Letters on the Call and Qualifications of the Ministers of the Gospel, in which the constitutional principles and the superior advantages of the Itinerant Ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church are stated and vindicated; although not finished, are so full on the subjects of which they treat, as to render any addition to them less important, with reference to the design of the author—the preservation of a spiritual Itinerant Ministry.

These Letters are now submitted to the public, and especially to the ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, with a sincere desire that they may prove an effectual means in the renewal and perpetuation of the Itinerant Ministry, as instituted by our venerable founder, the Rev. John Wesley,

in conformity with the teachings and examples of Christ and his Apostles.

It is a lamentable truth that this grand system of preaching the Gospel has greatly declined among us in the last half century. Indeed, in many parts of the work, and to a considerable extent, scarcely a vestige of the Itinerant plan remains, except the name, and the change of the preachers once in two years, not from one *circuit* to another, but from one *local station* to another. And even this change is submitted to, in many places, rather as a requirement of the Discipline than as a measure approved and desired. Most of our cities, large towns, and even country villages, have abandoned the Wesleyan plan, for a regular and stationary ministry. The consequences are obvious. In the cities and towns where there may be from five to twenty distinct charges, the great difficulty of selecting and stationing so many preachers who are well qualified, not only to preach the Word, but also to take the pastoral charge of the flock of Christ, will readily be perceived. And it is scarcely possible to do this, without depriving the circuits of those ministerial and pastoral talents, to which, to say the least, they have an equal claim with towns and cities. These difficulties would be chiefly, if not entirely, obviated on the Itinerant plan. One minister of age and experience might have the charge of at least four of these "distinct stations," with such assistants as, in regular circuit order, would carry on the whole work, and give the church and congregations the

benefit of the various talents of the ministry. What a beauty and excellency there is in this distribution of the different gifts of the Christian Ministry! On this apostolic plan we may say to the churches, "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas; all are yours." Separating country villages from circuits, and making them stations, is, in most cases, injurious to both, as well as to the preachers who may be appointed to serve them. The circuit is weakened and reduced in its resources; and the villages must have a "*young man of popular talents*," or they cannot support the "Station." Under such circumstances, it frequently occurs that, after a few years of toil and discouragement, these stations are again connected with the circuits, with little or no improvement in their condition. Circuits have been divided and subdivided, in many instances, more to accommodate a *local travelling ministry*, than to promote the best interests of the people. The result is, that the disciplinary allowance of the preachers fails, and large deficiencies are reported at the Conferences.

It is certainly true, that the deficiencies of the preachers in most of the Annual Conferences, are much greater now than they were twenty, or even forty years ago.

Is there not a cause? In all ordinary cases, the experience of many years has fully satisfied me, that the division of our great itinerant work into full four weeks' circuits, with two preachers appointed to each, is the most suitable and efficient mode of operations, in view of all the interests connected

with our ministry. On this plan, in almost all cases, the circuits may be supplied with ordained ministers in charge, and the preachers on trial be usefully employed as helpers in carrying on the work. One of the peculiar advantages of this plan is, that the young preachers will have the opportunity and the means of improvement in connexion with ministers of greater age and experience. Let this plan be adopted, and all the travelling preachers be "*men of one work*," being called of God, not to their farms or their merchandise, but to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, and the happy results of the system will soon be realized over the length and breadth of these lands.

Wherein we have departed from the efficient Wesleyan itinerancy, I would say, in the emphatic words of our venerable Asbury, "*Come back, come back!*"

JOSHUA SOULE.

HILL GROVE, TENN., Nov. 1848.

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LETTER I.

GENERAL REMARKS.

My Dear Brother,

The work which you propose to yourself, as a candidate for the ministry in the Travelling connexion, is great and good. It is good in itself, and in its legitimate consequences; and great in operation and object—in labours, toils, privations, and sufferings—and awfully great in responsibility. This work is intimately connected with the eternal destinies of men; and in this relation, presents an object of such magnitude, in reference to importance, as to exceed the grasp of human thought. The aspect under which it appears, in regard to this relation, is awfully responsible, and yet, at the same time, pleasingly interesting.

You are deeply conscious, no doubt, that

the possession of suitable graces and qualifications for this work, is of the highest moment, in reference both to your own welfare, and that of those who may be committed to your charge. Under the influence of such a view of this subject, you will always be ready to receive, with cheerfulness, any communications calculated to aid you in the prosecution of your purpose,—in the acquisition of those graces and qualifications, by which you will become an able and successful minister of Christ.

The dignity which attaches itself to the ministerial office, requires a corresponding dignity of character in the incumbents. They are forbidden, in the most solemn manner, and under obligations of the strongest nature, *to lower themselves down*, by any act of impropriety arising from the want either of knowledge or of grace. The sanctity of their office—the awfulness of its relations—the glory of the objects which it contemplates, are charged with motives of eternal weight to enforce this prohibition.

Nothing less than *divinely* communicated goodness and wisdom, can clothe a minister

with the dignity of character which he should sustain ; and these alone can prepare him, in their united operations, for usefulness in the service of God ;—because they will enable him to support the dignity of his office, by corresponding dignity of character. Here lies the strength of his influence ; and here is found the pledge of his success.

A fountain of goodness, opened in the heart by the *impartation of the divine nature*, and flowing from it in acts of benevolence and kindness, should be possessed by the minister of the gospel. Nor is it less necessary that he should have wisdom, equal in degree, and of the same divine origin, to direct the operations of this goodness. Without these, manifested everywhere in his life, his office must sink into disgrace.

The wisdom and the goodness to which I refer, are alike the gifts of God—yet they are to be obtained by the exertion of *human* power—power not of *nature*, but of *grace*. This goodness is to be acquired, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, by constant acts of devotion and faith. It is love, love to God and man, *out of a pure heart, and of a good con-*

science, and of faith unfeigned. Without perfect purity of heart, it never can be possessed in all its fulness. The wisdom that should accompany it, also is obtained, under the illuminations of the Holy Ghost, by the proper exercise of the understanding in the use of the means of *knowledge*, and in the proper *application* of knowledge to the conduct of life.

Although knowledge is not wisdom, yet the possession of the latter cannot be had in the absence of the former. Therefore, in order to become wise, you must understand; and in order to understand, you must study. The apostolic injunction to Timothy, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth," is obligatory on every minister, and cannot be disregarded without crime. The preacher who neglects the duty enjoined in this text, sins against himself, against the world, against the church, and against God.

Methodism is primitive Christianity revived, in doctrines and discipline. As you will entertain no doubt in reference to this position,

whatever others may think concerning it, Methodism will claim your attention, and present, in its doctrines and government, the great subjects of your studies.

In regard to the doctrines of the Methodist Episcopal Church, you will find no difficulty. They are contained in the New and Old Testaments, they are spread out more at large in the pages of our books; where they are supported by masterly argumentation, and illustrated in a manner peculiarly lucid. In reference to these doctrines, you will find abundant sources of information.

But in regard to the government of our church, there is a greater liability to mistake. It is true, the Discipline contains the principles of this government; and in respect to the members of the church at large, we have these principles daily exemplified in the administration of Discipline. But the peculiarity of our government in its special reference to the Itinerant connexion, is frequently misunderstood; and the excellence of its principles as they are adapted to the preservation of this connexion, is generally overlooked.

Ecclesiastical government has occupied

the pens of a great number of learned men. But many of them have *darkened counsel by words without knowledge*; and from the most of them, but little advantage is to be derived in reference to this subject. However, the candid inquirer after truth, laying aside all human views, will find in the New Testament the leading principles of that government, under which the Holy Ghost intended to place the Christian church. He will also discover, that the minutiae of the government have been left, if I mistake not, to be adapted, by the wisdom of the ministry, to existing circumstances of the church.

That this subject should be examined with more care than is usual, is manifest from the following consideration. We seem naturally disposed to think, that where men are generally agreed, they must be right; and consequently, that in those principles in which Christian denominations are generally united, we are not to suspect a want of conformity to primitive Christianity. But under no circumstances, perhaps, are we so liable to mistake, as under such as these.

The great dissimilarity of Methodism to

other religious systems, in particular in regard to the government of the ministry, will be found to its praise, when diligently and carefully compared with the principles of the New Testament. The excellence of its system of ministerial government, as it is calculated to preserve an Itinerant ministry, is above all praise; and it will be found to correspond, with great exactness, to the original model drawn by the pen of inspiration.

From various causes operating on a large scale, in the natural inclinations of the human heart, in the prejudices of education, in the tendencies of civil society, a strong disposition arises to *lower down* the high-toned principles of ministerial government, under the administration of which the primitive ministry became so formidable to the kingdom of darkness, and so successful in establishing the kingdom of God. An attempt has been made to counteract these causes, in the principles of the Itinerant connexion; —and to *rise up* to the dignity of the primitive ministry, to the *energy* of its operations, to the *honour* of its labours, privations and sufferings, to the *glory* of its successes.

The event shows that the attempt has not been altogether in vain; and the full accomplishment of the most glorious purpose now depends upon us, and upon our successors, in preserving inviolate the principles of our government, especially those which relate to the Travelling connexion.

In my subsequent communications, I shall endeavour to assist in preparing you for this work—*for the preservation of these principles.*

I have no apology to offer for addressing you on the subject of the government of our church. The necessity of discussing this subject, and the object I have in view, to aid in preserving the Itinerant connexion, raise me far above the need of any apology. But were this not so—in your friendly regard for me,—in my relation to you as an elder minister—and in your readiness of mind to receive and improve instruction, I should find sufficient advocates with you, to justify my procedure.

The necessity of discussing this subject.—This arises from many considerations. In special reference to yourself, it is of the utmost importance for you to have correct views of the

government of our church. For otherwise, you will not be able to adopt it, cheerfully and rationally, at your admission into the Travelling connexion; neither will you be qualified to execute it, when placed in charge with its administration.

Both of these considerations are of great weight. To be admitted into the Travelling connexion, without a knowledge of the principles by which it is governed, will place you in alarming circumstances. Ignorant of the government obligatory upon you, and bound, most solemnly and sacredly, to execute it correctly, and defend it faithfully, what language can describe the difficulties and dangers by which you will be surrounded! Your incapacity to defend it, may lead you to think that it is not capable of defence, and may turn away your mind from a love of the highest excellence. From disaffection you may be tempted to violate the most sacred vows of your ordination. If these things should not occur, your ignorance will expose you to contempt, by the commission of errors in its administration.

In a general point of view, as you may have

to contend with the influence of the times in favouring the spirit of innovation, this *necessity* will appear. The spirit of innovation is always awake, and actively engaged in the work of mischief. And as novelty, the great principle under which it operates, is the admiration of the present age, its influence becomes proportionately stronger. Besides, assuming at present the imposing aspect of *reformation*, it approaches the young and inexperienced with captivating charms. This *venerable aspect* presents it with so much plausibility, as to render it dangerous in the extreme.

The unparalleled success of our Travelling ministry, presents its excellence to view in a strong point of light; while it infers, from a similarity in effect, a similarity in principle to the primitive Christian ministry. God has blessed the labours of this connexion in a wonderful manner; and by the sanction of his own seal, he has rendered its legitimacy unquestionable. No stronger recommendation of the principles, under which it subsists, and by which it is governed, can be given; and this should lead us to guard them with great and watchful care, that we may hand them

down to our successors whole and sound. We should regard the least innovation with a jealous eye, and meet it with instant rejection. The spirit of *accommodation*, when it has an innovating bearing on any of these principles, should be regarded with an eye of disapprobation, and rejected with abhorrence, *as being, above all things, most likely to work our ruin.*

The argument in favour of our having the divine approbation, drawn from the astonishing success with which the Travelling connexion has been attended, is corroborated in an awful manner, by the ruin which has overtaken all who have withdrawn from us, for the purpose of constituting different forms of government. This speaks more than volumes against division, and against its precursor, *innovation*. This warning voice speaks, like peals of thunder, in the ears of reason. Let us hearken, and take heed.

The Itinerancy is the life of Methodism; the great spring that keeps every part of the machine in operation; the vital principle which imparts animation, health, strength, and vigour throughout the whole body. Destroy

this, and you will destroy Methodism. Her name may remain ; but her *glory* will be departed. The life and power of godliness in her will be no more. She will descend the declivity of defection in faith, until she is engulfed in the Dead Sea of formality.

Our *principles* of government, in reference to the ministry, are as necessary to the existence of the Itinerancy, as *it* is to the existence of Methodism. Introduce innovations in regard to them, so as to weaken their influence, or to break them as connecting bonds, and ruin will be the consequence.

In particular, if we would support the Itinerancy in health and vigour, we must preserve the executive department of the government *entire and inviolate*. The Episcopacy, with whom this *department* is deposited, is the *preserving* principle of the Itinerancy. In the exercise of its present powers, it is a principle of *conservation* ; introducing order, unity, and nervous operation, into the ranks of the connexion. By directing the mighty host of Travelling preachers, in a simultaneous attack upon the powers of darkness, the greatest possible effect is produced—and victory rendered

certain. Without an undivided principle of power in the executive department of the government, pervading as a soul the whole body, unity in design and order in operation would be impossible ; and without unity and order nothing can be effected.

The *power of appointment*, lodged in the hands of the Episcopacy, is the main-spring in this mighty machine, the Travelling connexion. This should be preserved with the greatest care. *The plan of our Itinerant General Superintendency*, especially in regard to this power, should be surrounded with strong bulwarks, in the principles and affections of the preachers and people belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church. No one should be suffered to innovate this plan, on any account whatever ; not only because innovation is prohibited by constitutional principles, but chiefly because it is forbidden by the doctrine of expedience. Upon its preservation depends the peace and safety of our church.

A high-toned missionary spirit is necessary to retain a minister in the Travelling connexion. When this is so far lowered down by *spiritual decay*, that its possessor is no longer

willing to receive his appointment from the hands of the Episcopacy, he drops out of the Itinerancy; and consequently is no longer an obstruction to its operations. This effect arising from the present administration of our government in the exercise of the power of appointment, tends greatly to the *conservation* of the church in general, and of the Itinerant connexion in particular. We, as ministers, ought to remember this; and the church should never forget it.

I must now close this letter. In my subsequent communications, I shall attempt to illustrate and defend the principles of our present form of government.

I remain, very affectionately,

Yours in Christ,

W——— B———.

LETTER II.

THE EXISTENCE OF A CONSTITUTION IN THE METHO-
DIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH PROVED.

My Dear Brother,

The habits of thinking arising from education, and the influence of custom, have a prodigious power over the understandings of men. These often so blind them that they become, in a certain degree, incapable of impartially discussing particular subjects, and hence men sometimes advance propositions which they would blush to acknowledge, if they had proceeded in a rational and impartial manner in the examination of the subjects involved.

In this country some very absurd notions exist in reference to the nature of constitutions. The people are accustomed to see the constitutional principles of their civil institu-

tions reduced to a written form of a regular nature ; and therefore the unthinking part of them seem disposed to believe, that those societies that have not written forms of constitutional principles, *are altogether without constitutions.*

This absurd notion has been advanced in reference to our church, although she has a Discipline *containing, defining, and predicating* the constitutional principles of her government. It may, therefore, be proper to offer a few arguments going to prove that the Methodist Episcopal Church is not without a constitution.

In respect to the conviction of your own mind, this, no doubt, is unnecessary ; but it may be of some use to you, when called to defend the character and government of our church. From among the great number of the considerations which press on this point, I select the following :—

1. It is not necessary that a constitution be written, to give it existence. Many nations have been without the knowledge of letters. These could have no written constitutions. But in the governments of these nations were

there no constitutions? Most certainly they were not destitute of all constitutional principles.

How many nations, not less famous for literature than for greatness, have flourished in the world for ages, without ever reducing their constitutions to written forms! Were not the nations of Greece and Rome such? And are there not some such nations now in existence?

The idea that a constitution, in order to give it existence, must be written, can be tolerated in no mind, but under the protection of the grossest ignorance. I know of no constitution, even though it may have been written in the most regular form, but what is based on some great principles which are not expressly written in the body of the instrument. Now these principles are as much a part of the constitution, as if they had been expressly written in the instrument itself. For, remove them, and the written constitution itself will cease to exist.

Therefore, no argument can lie against the existence of a constitution in the Methodist Episcopal Church, on the ground that she has

no formal instrument, which she has chosen to call a constitution.

2. But although she has no such formal instrument, yet she has written principles of a constitutional nature ; and these, not few in number, are recognised in the Book of Discipline. People who have been told that we have no constitution in our church, would be surprised, not a little, on being informed, that we have more than *seventy* constitutional articles expressly written ; besides some great constitutional principles, on which the government is based, and upon which the administration in every part proceeds.

3. That system of constitutional principles, recognised by the Discipline as such, because not subject to the power of the General Conference, was constituted and adopted in such a manner, as to stamp it with the inviolability of the most solemn compact. Reserving a more particular discussion of this subject for another place, I would here just remark, that both ministers and people cordially adopted this system of government. This consideration should have great weight.

The alterations, which, at any time, have

taken place, in reference to this system, regard, chiefly if not wholly, the *constituting* of a *delegated* General Conference, and the *limiting* and *defining* of its powers. Therefore, they affect no principle of a general interest in the church, but the legislative department of the government; and even this in such a way as to give greater security to the rights and immunities of both people and ministers. Besides, the alterations were adopted by the Itinerancy, and cheerfully received by the people.

4. The principles brought into view in my last paper, and recognised in the Discipline as not being subject to the power of the General Conference, have always been acknowledged as constitutional ones, ever since their adoption; and the government, in all its departments, has proceeded upon them as such. But now, behold! a great discovery is made! — they want the nature of constitutional principles! And forsooth — because they may, perhaps, not be correct in themselves — because the power which gave them birth was, peradventure, not quite legitimate — because the people of the Methodist Episcopal Church

did not ratify them with so much *pomp* and *formality* as to please the vanity of corrupt minds! And such are the causes of complaint, preferred by a few wild geniuses or disappointed individuals.

5. But the present question is not, whether the principles which we call constitutional are correct in themselves or not—whether the power which gave them birth was legitimate or not—whether the procedure which took place at their formation, was proper or not—or whether they were ratified by the Methodist people with as much pomp and formality as some might desire; but the question is, whether they have the nature of constitutional principles—whether they have been received by the church as such. That they have been so received is a matter of fact. It is not necessary that the system formed by the principles should be in all respects good, in order to give it the nature and force of a constitution. Thousands of bad constitutions exist; but their quality does not destroy their existence. I hope, however, to make it evident, that our constitution is a good one.

6. But to put this question for ever at rest. In the very nature of things, no society can exist without a constitution. For the very bonds under which it subsists, are constitutional principles ; and they operate as such to preserve it in being. The destruction of all constitutional principles would necessarily terminate the existence of the society. No matter whether these principles be written or oral ; they still form a constitution ; they form the *compact* under which the society subsists, and by which it is bound.

This argument, independent of all other considerations, is invincible. To talk about any society as existing without a constitution, is the grossest folly ; and the man that does so, can hardly give stronger proof that he is destitute of common sense. To add any further evidence of the existence of a constitution in our church, must be altogether useless. However, if any should still disbelieve, let them weigh the following remark.

If we have no constitution, then every act of our government has been without authority ; and consequently an act of usurpation. The conclusion is unavoidable. Yet, while this

uninterrupted usurpation has been going on, heaven has sanctioned our operations, even this prodigality of wickedness, by the astonishing success with which our ministry has been attended! Such usurpation never existed among us—for heaven never sanctions wickedness.

The remarks contained in this sheet have been elicited by an unpleasant circumstance. The existence of a constitution in our church has been called in question, by men whose standing in society is calculated to give weight and prevalence to their sentiments. What will not men do to serve a purpose?

This circumstance, while it exhibits the weakness of human nature in a very strong point, wears a portentous aspect. Let us learn from it, whom to trust.

I am, under the pleasant bonds of the constitution of our church, yours in love,

W——— B———.

LETTER III.

CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES.

My Dear Brother,

In my last letter, I attempted to establish the doctrine, that a constitution exists in the Methodist Episcopal Church. In this paper I purpose giving a succinct view of the principles of this constitution. I shall communicate them in the form of propositions; and any remarks I may wish to make respecting them, I shall place below as notes.

You will readily perceive that these propositions are not given as the constitution of our church, but only as expressing the principles which form that constitution. You will keep this thought in remembrance.

I. *Propositions respecting constitutional principles of a general nature.*

1. Men are called to the work of the ministry by the Holy Ghost.*

2. All *legitimate* authority to preach the word, and to administer discipline in the church of God, is imparted to the ministers of the gospel, by *express commission* from the Holy Ghost.†

* The principle here expressed, lies at the foundation of every church government, which has the least claim to authority on scriptural ground. The whole system of our government rests upon it. It is presupposed by every part of the Discipline; and the references to it, and applications of it, made in the Discipline, sufficiently evince, that our church considers it as the *first* great constitutional principle in her government.

† The doctrine contained in this proposition, in reference to its *divine authority* and *high importance*, will be taken into view in a subsequent paper. I would, however, make a few remarks in this place.

This principle necessarily results from the former one; and from the most cursory review of the subject, it will be evident that it is a constitutional principle in our system of government. For it runs throughout the whole of this system; pervades, as the soul, every part of it; and wherever to it reference is made, it is recognised as being *predicated and incontrovertible*.

Indeed, the whole of church government is based

3. The ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church is Itinerant.*

upon it; and to call it in question, is to deny all legitimate authority of an ecclesiastical nature. For, in the very nature of things, there can be no authority to preach the word, and to administer discipline in the church, but that which is given by *commission* from the Holy Ghost.

* That this is a principle of a constitutional nature, is evident from many considerations, among which are the following.

It is one of the strongest features in the government, impressing upon Methodism a more striking mark of distinction than anything else, and raising her excellence and dignity in a remarkable resemblance to primitive Christianity.

It involves the authority of the government, and the energies of the administration, in every department.

And above all, as the central point in the government, as the great spring of prosperity to the church, it has a direct bearing upon those principles which are evidently constitutional—with special reference to its own preservation. These reasons are abundantly sufficient.

The proposition, however, may appear at the first view to require some qualification, in regard to our *local* brethren. I may, if opportunity should offer, treat this subject more at large at some future time. I would here observe that the terms *local*

4. The Articles of Religion are constitutional principles.* (*Dis.* p. 21.)

location, and *locality* have become technicals with us; and as such, they do not convey the specific idea of a *settled* ministry.

Our local brethren are not *confined* by *settlement* to any particular congregations. Their ministerial labours are *circumscribed* only by *necessity*, arising from their *situation* in life. They are under no restraint by either *engagement* or *appointment*. For they preach *where* they please, and *when* they please, as opportunity offers, and their circumstances permit.

They therefore sustain a character distinctly different from that of a *settled* ministry. They are, in a certain sense, Travelling preachers: itinerating from place to place, to preach the gospel of Christ, as their circumstances permit.

* No *legislative* power among us has any authority to alter our doctrines of religion; for the General Conference, with whom this authority is lodged, is prohibited from treading upon the *ground* of our faith.

This constitutional prohibition is of the first importance to the peace and safety of the church, especially in our day, so famous for the spirit of innovation. It has become fashionable in the Christian world to treat the most sacred doctrines with a levity which suits no character but that of a deist. I am sorry that truth obliges me to make this statement.

5. The terms of communion, contained in our General Rules, are constitutional principles.* (*Dis. p. 22.*)

6. Membership in our church, both in reference to the laity and ministry, is held sacred, and guarded by constitutional provisions.† (*Dis. p. 22.*)

II. *Propositions, in relation to the division of power, respecting constitutional principles in reference to the General Conference.*

7. The General Conference, consisting of representatives from all the Annual Conferences, and holding its sessions quadrennially,

* These General Rules, like the Articles of Religion, are rendered sacred by constitutional provisions. Over them no *legislative* power has any control, so as to revoke or alter any of them.

† No one can lose his membership among us, either as a minister or a private person, except by a voluntary act in withdrawing from us, or by the commission of crime, well substantiated before a proper tribunal.

Every minister or preacher has the *privileges* of *trial*, in all possible cases, before a committee of his peers, and of an *appeal* to a higher court; and these privileges are constitutionally secured.

The constitution secures the same *privileges*, in all possible cases, to the private members of the church.

is the *legislative* body of the church ; being in possession of *delegated* and *limited* powers. (*Dis.* p. 20.)

8. Two-thirds of the representatives from all the Annual Conferences, are necessary to make a quorum in the General Conference. (*Dis.* p. 21.)

9. The president of the General Conference is always one of the bishops, except when they are all absent; then it has power to choose a president pro tempore. (*Dis.* p. 20.)

10. The authority of the General Conference extends to fixing the number of representatives, but so as to allow not more than one representative for every five members of the Annual Conference, nor a less number than one for every seven.* (*Dis.* p. 21.)

11. The General Conference has authority, by a vote of a majority of two-thirds, to *alter*, upon the joint recommendation of all the Annual Conferences, any limitation by which its powers are circumscribed.† (*Dis.* p. 22.)

* It is probable that this will undergo some alteration, in order to reduce the number of representatives, already too numerous.

† This principle has occasioned some complaint.

12. The authority of the General Conference extends, by a vote of a majority of two-thirds, to adopt, upon the joint recommendation of all the Annual Conferences, any new constitutional principle not contrary to the genius of the constitution.*

13. The General Conference has full power to make rules and regulations for the government of our church, under certain specified limitations and restrictions.† (*Dis.* p. 21.)

The *same* men, for *opposite* reasons, have preferred charges against its propriety. On the one hand, they complain that this renders it next to impossible to effect any alteration in the *restrictive* provisions; and on the other hand, that it authorizes the Annual Conferences, in connexion with the General Conference, to *alter* even the *ground* of our faith. So it seems it is too *rigid*, and too *lax*, at the same time!

This glaring inconsistency shows, that the complaint is predicated in ignorance.

* It is admitted, that this is an inferred principle; but it is evident that it results as a necessary consequence, from the preceding principle.

† In this grant are delegated the principal powers of the General Conference. They appear to be considerably large—sufficiently so for all the purposes of good government. But when it is considered

III. *Propositions respecting constitutional principles, in reference to the Annual Conferences.*

14. The Annual Conferences have authority to appoint, or elect, their number of delegates to the General Conference. (*Dis.* p. 20.)

15. The authority of the Annual Conferences extends to advising the General Superintendents to call, at any time, a General Conference; and if there be no General Superintendent, to calling respectively themselves a General Conference at any time when they may judge it necessary. (*Dis.* p. 20.)

16. The Annual Conferences have authority to propose, by their joint recommendation, to the General Conference, any *alteration* in the restrictive provisions of the constitution. (*Dis.* p. 22.)

17. The Annual Conferences have authority to propose, by their joint recommendation, to

that the constitutional principles recognised by the *limitations*, and all others necessarily resulting from the genius of our government, are not included in this delegation of power, it may be thought that the powers of the General Conference are not so *gigantic* as to create any *alarm*.

the General Conference, any new constitutional principle for adoption—provided it be not contrary to the genius of the constitution.

18. The Annual Conferences have authority to judge of questions of constitutionality ; and the concurring decision of a majority of them must be final.*

IV. *Propositions respecting constitutional principles in reference to the Episcopacy.*

19. Episcopacy is essential to our government, and subsists in it under a particular PLAN of Itinerant General Superintendency ; the essential principles of which plan are constitutional—not subject to the power of the General Conference. (*Dis.* p. 21, 22.)

20. The great leading principle of Episcopal power in our government, is unity.†

* The constitutional principles, recognised in the two last propositions, necessarily result from the *nature* of the Annual Conferences, as constituting the body of the Itinerancy.

† That this is a fundamental principle in our government, is manifest. The Superintendency of this *power* is not only *Itinerant*, but *general* ; and therefore a bishop is required to *travel at large*. It is not subject to division—because it is *general*.

21. The Episcopacy is charged with the *Executive* department of the government, and required to perform all executive acts, by its own members, or by its officers. (*Dis.* p. 26, par. 3, 5.)

22. It possesses, as a *necessary* power for the accomplishment of the above duty, the prerogative of appointing the presiding elders and of stationing the preachers. (*Dis.* p. 26, 28, par. 2, 1.)

23. The power of ordination is delegated to the Episcopacy.* (*Dis.* p. 26, par. 6.)

24. The prerogative of presiding in our Conferences, both General and Annual, is held by the Episcopacy.† (*Dis.* p. 26.)

Division would render it *particular*, in contradistinction to its being *general*. The incumbents of this office constitute, therefore, *one body*, holding *one* office, and being equal in power, and bound to act in unity of design and operation. But more of this hereafter.

* If the Episcopal office should ever become vacant, the General Conference has authority, having elected a bishop, to appoint three of the elders to ordain him.

† If no bishop should be present at any Conference, it has authority to appoint a president,

25. The members of the Episcopacy are invested with authority, by the election of the General Conference, and by ordination. (*Dis. p. 25.*)

26. The bishops are amenable to the General Conference ; and, for *improper conduct*, either in reference to morality or official administration, it may expel them. (*Dis. p. 26.*)

V. *Proposition respecting a constitutional principle, in reference to temporal concerns.*

27. The produce of the Book Concern, and of the Charter Fund, cannot be applied to any purpose but the benefit of the Travelling, supernumerary, superannuated and worn-out preachers, their wives, widows, and children. (*Dis. p. 22.*)

I shall conclude this letter by observing, that in the preceding twenty-seven propositions, I have endeavoured to present a brief and general view of the constitutional principles of our government. I do not say, that they contain all these principles ; but I may, perhaps, be permitted to say that this view is tolerably correct.

excepting where, in the Annual Conferences, the Episcopacy appoints some one by letter.

I know, indeed, that several of the doctrines involved in these principles, are called in question. And, therefore, in subsequent papers, I shall enter more at large into the defence and illustration of these doctrines.

I am yours, affectionately, in the fellowship of a church, whose government I love,

W——— B———.

LETTER IV.

MEN ARE CALLED TO THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY BY
THE HOLY GHOST.

My Dear Brother,

In my last letter I laid before you a succinct view of the principles of the constitution of our church. In the paper before that, I endeavoured to establish, by various arguments, the existence of a constitution in the Methodist Episcopal Church. To the arguments then urged, there is no necessity of adding anything further. The arguments already offered, are more than sufficient to settle the point in question. Indeed the subject is so plain, that it would have looked like folly to argue it, had it not been for existing circumstances.

Doctrines frequently receive currency in the world, not from the evidence of their

truth and excellence, but from the celebrity of their authors. Men who are in possession of a little popularity, sometimes advance new and extravagant doctrines, in order to fix the attention of the gaping multitude upon themselves as prodigies of wisdom—because of the astonishing discoveries that they have made. And it sometimes happens, that such persons become popular, in proportion to their extravagance.

When by circumstances, *seemingly fortunate*, they are enabled to occupy this ground, they stamp their paper with a fictitious value, and pass it upon the world as though its credibility was sufficient to give it universal currency. But enter the vaults—count the precious metals promised in payment on the face of their bills. Alas! they are as empty as vanity itself. Their walls never enclosed such precious deposits. However, no matter for that, so long as it can be kept a secret.

But it must not remain a secret. The exposure is required—by the good of the world—by the peace of society—by the interests of the church—and by the glory of God.

The necessity of refuting doctrines of a

very extravagant nature, is sometimes the more pressing in proportion as they are the more extravagant, especially when they approach us under the sanction of a very respectable parentage, invested with the imposing habiliments of a fine style, covered with the charms of novelty, and promising liberty as the reward of our acceptance. I will not say, that the doctrine opposed in my last paper came with all these recommendations; but I will say, that none can be more famous for extravagance, and few, perhaps, for dangerous tendency.

But this question is for ever at rest. Another part of the subject demands attention.

We have a constitution—this is a matter of fact, as evident as the existence of our society. But is it a good one?—Is it legitimate in its origin?—regular in the procedure of its formation?—correct in its principles?—and happy and salutary in its tendency? It is all this—as my subsequent communications, I hope, will sufficiently evince.

The first great principle, which lies at the foundation of the government of our church, and which, indeed, lies at the foundation of

all legitimate ecclesiastical government, is, "Men are called to the work of the ministry by the Holy Ghost." On this the whole of our government rests. It is frequently recognised in the Discipline, as a first great principle of a constitutional nature, especially in the forms of ordination. And you know that before a man can be admitted among us even as a candidate for the ministry, he must not only profess to believe that he is moved by the Holy Ghost to this work—but he must give evidence of his call, in his grace, gifts, and fruits.

It must be admitted as an incontrovertible position, that every man who has a legitimate claim to the sacred office, has been called of God to this work; and by the consecration of the Spirit only, he can be prepared to become an able minister of the New Testament.

Therefore, as a candidate for the ministry, your first great concern is, to know that you are called by the Spirit of God to this work. For without this knowledge, every step you take in accomplishing the object of your pursuit, is an act of presumption.

But you will always remember, that before a man is called to the ministerial office, he is made a subject of grace, in the enjoyment of experimental religion. For man, by nature a child of wrath, an enemy to God, a stranger to the covenants of promise, and an alien to the commonwealth of Israel, can never, in this unconverted state, be admitted into holy orders, by the Holy Ghost. For such admission would involve absurdity, which cannot be attributed to Infinite Wisdom. He must first be justified by faith, and be made a partaker of the divine nature. He must be delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

When a man submits to the influence of the Spirit, so as to receive in himself the principles of a new and divine life, he is constituted a child of God, and a subject of the Redeemer's kingdom. Then he may sustain, with propriety, the character of an ambassador of Christ, being called to this work by the Holy Ghost.

The evidences of this call, and qualifications to perform the duties imposed by it, are given in the special influences of the Spirit—

communicating burning zeal for the glory of God, and more than common desire for the salvation of men—imparting to the understanding “a right judgment in the things of God, a just conception of salvation by faith”—and touching the tongue with the fire of heavenly eloquence.—These *personal evidences*, existing in *qualifications* for the work, are corroborated by the *effects* produced in the exercise of the ministry. *Souls are converted to God.*

If any man stand in the gracious state before described, and possess the evidences of his call to the ministry as here briefly delineated, he may rest assured that he has a legitimate claim to the sacred office. Should this be your situation, let me address the language of Paul unto you: “Make full proof of thy ministry.”

The excellence of our government, in reference to this subject, will appear, from our sacred regard for the ministerial office. We do not admit into this office, those whom we believe to be unconverted, or not called by the Holy Ghost to exercise the sacred functions.

We may differ from others, in regard to

our views of the Christian ministry. We think that the relations it bears to the world, to the church, and to God, invest it with high respectability; that it sustains a character of dignity more than mortal, in the holiness of its functions, and in its intimate connexion with the concerns of eternity; and that the responsibility which it imposes upon its incumbents, a responsibility immeasurably great, throws around it an air of terrible majesty, forbidding, under awful considerations, the approach of all who are not called of God to the work of the ministry.

In this respect our church is worthy of great praise; and her merit is so much the greater, as she has had to contend with the influence of opposing opinions, made strong by general adoption in the Christian world. The doctrine of *human* consecration, in reference to the gospel ministry, has been for many ages prevalent, and carried into practical operation. The sacred office has been made a subject of *speculation*, and the preparation and the consecration of men to fill it, a *mere mercenary trade*. The divine *prerogative of calling, preparing, and constituting* the ministers of Christ,

has been usurped by daring mortals ; and under the long continuance of this usurpation, they have become confident that they are fully able to accomplish this great and divine work. And to such an astonishing height has this presumptuous confidence arisen, that, instead of feeling guilt for the commission of this crime, they arrogate to themselves great merit for doing so much for the church of God.

They do indeed make their pupils learned ; they polish them with arts and sciences ; they fill their heads with the principles of logic ; they soften and sweeten their tongues with the oil of eloquence. But they cannot make these rebels to God his loyal subjects ; they cannot change them in heart ; and therefore they place them in the priestly office as vain, as proud, as ungodly, as they were before they passed under their *consecrating* influence. And if these *candidates* were saints, their *masters in Israel* could not anoint them with that unction of the Holy Ghost, without which no man can preach “in the demonstration of the spirit and of power.”

Our church, indeed, does not despise human learning. She sets a high value upon it. She

knows that the minister who is in possession of it, has great advantages above those who do not enjoy it. But she has learned to think and act according to the principles recorded in the Holy Scriptures. Here she finds the ministerial character drawn with the peculiarities of a *divine* call, and qualifications imparted by *supernatural* influence. And therefore she concludes that the Holy Ghost makes every legitimate minister, and that the Holy Ghost alone qualifies him to fill the office with honour and success.

In departing from these views, the Christian world has fallen into gross errors ; in consequence of which the ministerial office has been prostituted to the basest of purposes—to the accomplishment of the blackest designs, which were ever formed by human ambition. Many causes, no doubt, have been combined in operation, to work the corruption of the ministry. But not one, in my opinion, has operated with so much energy, or with such mischievous effect, as the filling of the sacred office with unsuitable persons—with persons the Holy Ghost never designed for the work of the ministry.

Wherever the doctrine of the *divine appointment and consecration* of the ministry has been denied or passed over with disregard in the administration of ecclesiastical government, there godliness has ceased to exist—because there a legitimate gospel ministry has given place to a spurious one—a ministry which is a mere shadow—a name without the reality of the thing—a form without the life and power, because it has not the unction of the Holy Ghost.

The doctrine advocated in this sheet, is of vital importance in the system of Christianity. The truth, the excellence, the harmonious connexion, dependence, and consistency of this system, the glory of its doctrines, the purity of its moral obligations in reference to their practical influence, the vitality and energy of the gospel, all depend upon the principle involved in this doctrine.

Remove this principle, and destruction will ensue. Christianity divested of this will become like ancient Palmyra. It will be a heap of beautiful ruins, all lying in disorder, amidst a silence deep as that of death, where

nothing is heard, where nothing is seen but the dreary waste.

I leave you to pursue, in some future hour of leisure, the reflections suggested by this remark, while I observe that at present our attention is called to the evidence of the doctrine here advocated.

It will not be expected, that this evidence can be spread out at large on the pages of these letters. The limits prescribed to them, render this impossible. For such is the abundance of it, that a full developement of this part of the subject would require a work of many volumes.

Therefore I shall only make a few observations in regard to this evidence, referring you to the sources whence it flows in great abundance.

That our church has not departed from the doctrines of the gospel, in that part of her government which respects the doctrine under consideration, is evident from the whole tenor of the New Testament. The writings of this Holy Book everywhere evince that the Christian priesthood, like that of Aaron, is of divine appointment. The facts herein re-

corded in relation to the calling of the Apostles and the first ministers of the gospel, with a multitude of references to this subject, go to establish this doctrine beyond controversy.

Arguments going to prove that ministers can be made by the Holy Ghost only, may be drawn from the calling of the Apostles, and of the seventy disciples whom Christ sent to preach his gospel—from the calling of those ministers who were sent immediately after the ascension of Christ—from the extraordinary call of St. Paul, with many others mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles—from many passages of Scripture, expressly containing the doctrine—from many more having a plain reference to it—from the nature of the office—from the impossibility of discharging its duties, without this call of the Spirit—from the great success which attended the preaching of the primitive ministers, who professed to be called by the Holy Ghost—from like success *now* attending the ministry of those who claim the same *mission* of the Spirit, and who support their claim by their *works*—from the want of success in all who

deny the doctrine—from the absurdities and dangerous consequences resulting from the denial of this doctrine.

I shall produce a few passages from the Holy Scriptures, and make some remarks upon them.

I. “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.” (*Matt. ix. 38.*)

1. It is worthy of observation, that this language was spoken in direct reference to the ministers of the gospel, as receiving their *mission* from God, the Lord of the harvest. For these words fell from the lips of Jesus as he “went about preaching the gospel of the kingdom,” “saw the multitudes,” “and was moved with compassion on them—because they were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd.” These multitudes he represents under the figure of a plentiful harvest, and laments the fewness of the labourers—the want of ministers to preach the gospel of the kingdom. (*Matt. ix. 36, 37.*)

2. On this ground Jesus Christ exhorts his disciples to pray the Lord of the harvest, the God of glory, *to send forth* spiritual labourers

into his harvest—to *send forth* pastors to gather these scattered sheep of the house of Israel into the fold of God.

3. Therefore it is evident that the power of *sending* forth labourers—ministers of the gospel—belongs to the Lord of the harvest. God only can *commission* men to preach the word of life. If men could send forth labourers, with proper qualifications and legitimate authority, why pray the Lord of the harvest to do it?

In accordance with this view of the subject, God assured his ancient people, that the prophets who were not *sent* by him, should not profit them. “I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all.” (*Jer.* xxiii. 32.)

And St. Paul, full of this doctrine of a *divine mission*, asks, with great confidence, “and how shall they preach except they *be sent*?” (*Rom.* x. 15.)

II. “Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God.” (*2 Cor.* i. 21.)

In this language the Apostle speaks of two distinct operations. The one, as then transpiring; the other, as having been accomplish-

ed. "He who *establisheth* us with you in Christ, and he who *hath anointed* us, is God."

1. The first is an act of establishment—the second is an act of anointing. Of this establishment in Christ, he speaks as being common to all Christians—*God establisheth us with you* in Christ. But he speaks of this anointing as being peculiar—God hath anointed *us*. Therefore it is evident that the anointing mentioned in the text, regards, exclusively, the Apostle and his brethren in the ministry.

2. The term *anointed* is taken from the Old Testament service, and has a special reference to the consecration of the priesthood. All the ministers of the altar, under the economy of the Mosaical dispensation, were set apart for divine service, by being anointed with the holy oil. This represented to them the influence of the Holy Ghost, to qualify them for the sacred duties of their office. And hence the Redeemer, as the high priest of the heavenly sanctuary, is called the Messiah, *The Anointed One*.

Therefore the operation of anointing, spoken of in the text, must mean the consecration of the Christian ministry. It can in this place

mean nothing else. Now the Apostle positively declares, that this is the operation of God: *He which hath anointed us, is God.* God has *called, appointed, and consecrated us,* as the ministers of the New Covenant. This text, therefore, as well as the former, is directly in point; containing expressly the doctrine for which I contend.

In perfect consistency with this view, and equally in proof of the doctrine under consideration, the same apostle declares, that his "preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in *demonstration of the Spirit* and of power." (1 Cor. i. 4.) And the sentiment of St. Peter on this subject, perfectly agrees with that of St. Paul. For he informs us, that the gospel was "preached with the *Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.*" (1 Peter i. 12.)

III. "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, *over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers,* to feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts xx. 28.)

Nothing can be more in point, or more plainly assert the doctrine I advocate, than

these words. They were addressed to the ministers, *the elders*, of the Church at Ephesus; and they positively declare, that these ministers in elders' orders, were made overseers over the flock, by the Holy Ghost. Indeed, there are no legitimate ministers of the gospel, but those who are made such by the Spirit of God.

I am, under the sanction of this holy calling, your fellow-labourer in the Gospel Ministry,

W—— B——.

LETTER V.

ALL LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY TO PREACH THE WORD,
AND TO ADMINISTER DISCIPLINE IN THE CHURCH
OF GOD, IS IMPARTED TO THE MINISTERS OF THE
GOSPEL BY EXPRESS COMMISSION FROM THE HOLY
GHOST.

My Dear Brother,

The proposition with which this paper is headed, contains a constitutional principle in our Church government. This will be evident at the first view of the subject. For, the structure of our governmental system, especially in regard to the ministry, will at once show that our church holds as a correct principle, that all legitimate authority to rule in ecclesiastical affairs, is derived from *divine* commission. For this authority, according to this system, is committed to the hands of the ministry; because they profess to be moved by the Holy Ghost to preach, and have

given proof that their claim to holy orders is valid. And this is done on this principle, that their call to the ministry includes their commission to exercise this authority, according to the division of power in the church. Now the whole of the procedure of our church, in respect to constituting her ministers, in regard to committing special divisions of power into their hands, and in reference to the administration of discipline by them, is founded on this doctrine,—they are called by the Holy Ghost to the work of the ministry. And none but such as she believes to be thus called to this work, are admitted into holy orders, and invested with ecclesiastical authority. It is then manifest, that the proposition, “All legitimate authority to administer Discipline in the Church of God is by *divine* commission,” is held as a constitutional principle by our church. The history of Methodism, in regard to the principles of government, strongly corroborates this doctrine.

But is this principle a correct one? Is it indeed true, that authority to rule in the

church is committed to the ministry? and is this commission from the Holy Ghost?

That this principle is correct—that all legitimate authority to rule in the church of God is communicated to the ministers of the gospel by *divine* commission, is evident from many considerations. Let the following be duly weighed.

1. The principle here laid down, is a direct and necessary consequence of the doctrine of a *divine call*. Men are called by the Holy Ghost to the work of the ministry; therefore, authority to do this work must be imparted by the Holy Ghost alone.

It is impossible to avoid the force of this argument. For, as a *divine call* to the work of the ministry is a doctrine of an incontrovertible nature, and as this work includes of necessity the administration of discipline, the consequence is unavoidable—authority to do the work of administering Discipline must be imparted by the Spirit of God to the ministers of the gospel.

To call in question the doctrine established in my last paper, and on which this argument is predicated, is indirectly to deny the

authority of the Holy Scriptures. For the Bible is full of this doctrine, as we have before seen. Men are called to the work of the ministry by the Holy Ghost; this work includes the administration of discipline; therefore authority to govern the Church of God in the administration of discipline, must be imparted to these men thus called by the Holy Ghost.

2. It is generally admitted in the Christian world, that no one has authority to preach the gospel, but such as have been called to this work by the Spirit of God. Even those who presume to constitute ministers themselves, exhibit to the world in their conduct the truth of this principle. For they require, I believe without exception, all who are admitted to ordination to profess that they are moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon them the office of the ministry. Whether they think that when a man has passed under the consecration of their hands, the Spirit of God is under some kind of obligation to call him to the work, is not within my province to determine. But one thing appears certain, they acknowledge

the necessity of a *divine* call, by making the requisition above stated.

Now this acknowledgment goes to favour the doctrine under consideration. For if we receive authority to preach the gospel, in our call to the work of the ministry by the Spirit of God, then it ought to be admitted that we receive authority to govern the church, in the same manner, and from the same *divine source*. For the administration of discipline is not only one great part of the work of the ministry, but it is as sacred in its nature, and as difficult of performance as the preaching of the gospel of Christ. Is it not as difficult to have correct views of the great principles of ecclesiastical government, as it is to understand the doctrines of religion? Is it not equally necessary, in both these cases, to enjoy the special illumination of the Holy Spirit?

The truth is, that the preaching of the word of God, and the administration of discipline, are the two parts of the same great work, the successful accomplishment of both of which equally depends on divine influence; and therefore no man can have authority to do

either of them, unless commissioned by the Spirit of God. //

Men who deny that the government of the church is committed to the hands of the ministry, and yet admit that ministers only have authority to preach the word of God, do not appear conscious of the inconsistency with which they clog their systems. Neither do they seem sensible how they lower themselves down in the estimation of thinking men, by advocating principles of a contradictory nature. While they set themselves up as masters of reason, as famous *reformers* of ecclesiastical government on *rational* principles, they give strong proof that they have relinquished reason in order to introduce innovation and corruption.

3. The disposition of the government of the church into the hands of the ministry, is consistent with the fitness of things, considered in relation to the doctrine of a *divine call*. It agrees with that analogy which we discover everywhere in the works of God. The ministers of the gospel are ambassadors for Christ. The terms of reconciliation between God and the world are committed to them, to be pro-

posed to the rebellious for acceptance. When any submit to these terms, they are to be received into the Christian church, as subjects of the Redeemer's kingdom. Now is it not perfectly reasonable, that the principles of this kingdom should be committed to these ministers of Christ, as well as the terms of reconciliation? Indeed, submission to the terms of reconciliation necessarily implies the reception of those principles under which the church should be governed; and therefore, in no hands could the government of the church be intrusted with so much propriety, as in the hands of the ambassadors of Christ. Who can be so good guardians of the government of Christ in his church, or so well prepared to administer this government, as his own agents, appointed and qualified by the anointing of the Holy Ghost?

The truth is, the duties involved in the ministration of reconciliation cannot be fully discharged by the ministers of the gospel, without the exercise of ecclesiastical government; the preaching of the word being intimately connected with the administration of discipline.

4. Besides these considerations, there is another view of this subject which is worthy of our attention. The consequences resulting from the denial of the doctrine advocated in this sheet, are utterly inadmissible; for they are dreadful in nature and tendency. For, if authority to do that part of the work of the ministry which is involved in the administration of discipline, is not from the Holy Ghost, then it must arise from compact, formed on principles of human associations, such as those under which the nations of the earth subsist. If this be admitted, then it will follow—that ecclesiastical government must rest on the same base of civil government, and therefore possess the same nature, and have authority to exercise the same powers—that it is not improper to amalgamate the church and the state into one body, under one head, either civil or ecclesiastical, according to human election; or supposing them to remain separate, to give them reciprocal transposition of powers, to lodge the powers of the church in the hands of the state, and the powers of the state in the hands of the church—that the state may require, under the severest penalty,

uniformity of faith in doctrines established by civil authority, without any infringement upon the privileges of conscience, or any violation of religious rights—that the church of God, founded on *supernatural* principles and constituted by the *supernatural* operations of the Holy Spirit, must, nevertheless, be governed by *natural* principles!—that the church of Christ has a right, when she may see fit to exercise it, to inflict capital punishment for disobedience to her orders! But why proceed any further in these dreadful consequences? We are already driven hard upon the heels of the church of Rome, where her footsteps mark the infernal ground on which she reared the court of the inquisition—the curse of Europe, and the scandal of the Christian name!

That these consequences, and many others of like nature, result from admitting that ecclesiastical government should exist, and yet denying that authority to exercise this government is imparted by the Holy Ghost to the ministers of the gospel, will be manifest to every man who candidly and carefully examines the subject. And this consideration

alone is sufficient to silence all who call in question the doctrine defended in this paper.

5. But there is another thought which has more weight, if possible, than the one which we have just had in review before us. Every principle which can be brought to operate upon us, is either natural or supernatural. Therefore, if authority to do the work of the ministry, in particular the administration of discipline, is not supernaturally imparted, it must be derived from the principles of nature. But this authority cannot be derived from the principles of nature—because by these principles the work is not within the compass of possibility.

The work of the ministry is a divine work, the accomplishment of which is infinitely above the powers of nature. Natural principles, put into operation, may produce natural effects; but they cannot rise into the regions of grace, and bring to pass supernatural effects. The work of the ministry, in reference both to preaching the word and the administering of discipline, being infinitely above the powers of nature, can be accomplished only by the operation of divine energy,

and by the special authority of the Holy Spirit.

Now, let it ever be remembered, that there is not the least shadow of proof that the Holy Spirit authorizes the *people* to preach the word of God, and administer discipline in the church. But he authorizes the ministers of the gospel to perform both these things; therefore, the government of the church rests *solely* in the hands of the ministry.

I am, very respectfully,

Yours in love,

W——— B———.

LETTER VI.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

My Dear Brother,

The doctrine in support of which I offered several arguments in the preceding paper, is of such importance to religion, as to demand more than common regard. The want of duly regarding it, has led to many dangerous errors in ecclesiastical government, and has occasioned great perplexities and troubles in the Christian world. It may, therefore, be necessary to continue the discussion of this subject, and to add some further arguments in favour of the doctrine in question.

6. The great commission given to the Apostles, and through them to their successors in office in the ministry unto the end of the world, includes the doctrine under consideration: “Go ye, therefore, and μαθητευσατε

disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (*Matt.* xxviii. 19, 20.)

This commission evidently imports authority to the ministers of the gospel to exercise government in the church of God. A few remarks will set this point in a strong light before you.

The authority with which the Apostles were invested in the above language, is not confined to them, but is intended to be imparted to all faithful ministers of Christ, in all ages of the world. For this is necessarily implied in the promise with which the commission concludes: "*And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*" The promise cannot be exclusively applied to the Apostles, —because they were not to continue *always* upon the earth, but soon to be removed to their reward in heaven. But the office of the gospel ministry, intended to remain until the end of time, was to be filled with a succession of ministers, who have an equal right to expect

the accomplishment of the promise. Therefore the promise is applicable to the Apostles, and their successors in office in the ministry, throughout all ages of the world.

It is worthy of remark, that the command and the promise cannot be reasonably separated—for the performance of the former absolutely depends upon the fulfilment of the latter. We cannot disciple the nations, *unless Christ be with us*. Therefore as the promise is made to all faithful ministers of Christ, they must be invested with the authority contained in the command.

Now the commission here given goes directly to authorize the minister of Christ to administer discipline in the church of God—*go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all nations*. Bring them unto my school, and, as masters under me, exercise authority over them, in teaching them to submit to my government, and become faithful subjects of my kingdom.

It is abundantly evident that this is the legitimate construction of the passage before us; nor is it less evident, that it teaches the doctrine which is under consideration. Nothing can be plainer, than that the government

of the church is hereby given into the hands of the ministers of Christ.

It is to be observed, however, that while they possess authority to govern the church of God, they are not at liberty to follow their own fancy, in constituting systems of ecclesiastical government, on natural principles, or on political maxims—but they are bound, in the most solemn manner, to govern the church according to the doctrines of Christ. They are not to lord it over the people of God—but to administer discipline in love, in meekness, in righteousness, and in truth. “Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” They are not to rule the church according to their own pleasure, but according to the will of God—not according to human speculations, but according to *whatsoever Christ hath commanded*.

It seems very strange indeed, that any man, who has this passage before him, should call in question the authority of the ministers of Christ, in reference to the government of the church. Certainly, it must be from not duly considering the import of this divine commission.

7. The Apostles and those who were contemporary with them in the ministry, exercised the powers of government in the church of Christ. In their transactions in reference to ecclesiastical authority, they gave abundant exemplification of the doctrine now in review before us. And, certainly, their conduct in relation to this subject, if it be found to advance on the principle involved in this doctrine, will be a sufficient proof, that they were invested by divine authority with the powers of church government. To call this in question, would be, not only to reject the legitimacy of their claim to the ministerial office, but to fix a high stigma upon their moral character.

Reference to all the transactions in which the principle for which I contend is recognised, is quite unnecessary. A few instances will be sufficient for my present purpose.

The first Christian council was held in Jerusalem ; and it consisted, not of laymen in whole or in part, but of the ministers of the gospel—*Apostles and Elders*. The sacred historian informs us, in reference to the great question agitated at Antioch, respecting the authority of the ritual law, that “the Apostles

and Elders came together for to consider this matter." (*Acts* xiv. 6.)

This conference* of divines exercised the highest ecclesiastical legislative authority by deciding a question in which the abrogation of institutions divinely appointed was determined, and by making *decrees* for the government of the church. And by these transactions they gave unequivocal evidence that their commission to preach the gospel clothed them with authority to govern the church of God.

No doubt can exist that any one of the Apostles might have determined the question which came before this council—because the Apostles were all divinely inspired. But they chose rather to determine it in a general assembly of ministers, in order to sanction the decision with greater weight of authority, and to lay down for succeeding generations a permanent precedent, going to establish the doctrine that the government of the church is committed to the hands of the ministry.

It may be supposed that I have misunderstood the sacred historian, in reference to this

* So it is called by Paul. *Gal.* ii. 6.

council—"For he represents the whole church, as well as the Apostles and Elders, as being engaged in sending Judas and Silas, and superscribing the letter containing the decision."

It is worthy of remark, that these transactions do not contain any exercise of ecclesiastical government.

Also it ought not to be forgotten, that it was very proper for the members of the church at Jerusalem to superscribe the *decrees* of the Apostles and Elders—in order to show submission to ministerial authority, and that the church at Jerusalem held the abrogation of the ritual part of the law, by having its accomplishment in Jesus Christ. But these circumstances do not infer, that the whole church at Jerusalem were assembled in council.

Besides, the language of the historian, in another place, determines this question. "And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the Apostles and Elders which were at Jerusalem." (*Acts* xvi. 4.) Here we are expressly told, that the decrees were ordained, not of the church, but of the

Apostles and Elders. It is therefore evident that the lay members of the church at Jerusalem had nothing to do in forming these decrees.

There is one consideration which places the determination of this council in such light as to ground an argument of uncommon weight, in favour of the doctrine for which I contend. This is the uncommon importance of the question decided. To have a correct view of this, it is necessary to consider the circumstances under which the church then existed. It was then gradually passing from under the heavy burden of a ritual service, into the liberty of evangelical worship. In this transition some circumstances arose, which were extremely perplexing to the minds of some Jewish converts. The abrogation of institutions which they had been taught should abide to the end of time, involved difficulties to some of them utterly insurmountable. And, therefore, they were indulged in the continuance of their ritual service.

But this indulgence was abused, by attempting to incorporate Christianity with Judaism, and by teaching that the Gentiles must be

circumcised, and keep the law of Moses, in order to salvation. Such abuse was intolerable—not only because it imposed a grievous burden upon the Christian church—but chiefly because it indirectly denied the truth of Christianity itself. For if the ritual part of the law had not its accomplishment and end in Jesus Christ, then he could not be the Messiah. The question then involved a subject, on the one hand, of great difficulty in reference to the prejudices of the Jews, and on the other, of inconceivable importance in regard to the abrogation of the ceremonial law. It was therefore absolutely necessary to bring to bear on this question, all possible weight of authority. If any question ever demanded such procedure more than another, this was the one. And it received such weight of authority in a council of divines, consisting of the Apostles and Elders of the church.

The inference is obvious, the exercise of ecclesiastical authority belongs to the ministry alone. No case can be more directly in point than the one before us; and in support of the doctrine contained in the above infer-

ence, it will outweigh ten thousand volumes of reasonings to the contrary.

8. 'The Apostle Paul evidently proceeds, in his address to the elders of the church at Ephesus, upon the same principle on which the ministerial council advanced. In the most solemn manner he charges these presbyters "to take heed to themselves, and to all the flock"—predicating his charge upon their high commission from God—"Over which the *Holy Ghost* hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he purchased with his own blood." This language is strongly expressive of authority to govern the church as the ministers of Christ. It is well known that the overseers, or shepherds, were charged with the government of the flocks under their care; and that to take heed to them was impossible, without exercising government over them. Nor is the phrase, "to feed the church of God," less expressive of authority to govern; for it must be fed with discipline, as well as doctrine. The latter will do but little good without the former. The solemn manner in which he holds them responsible, and the awfulness of this respon-

sibility arising from the value of the flock, as being purchased by the blood of God, give the fullest force to the argument.

9. The same doctrine is taught in a very impressive manner by St. John, in the former part of the Book of Revelation. There we discover, in the addresses to the angels of the Asiatic churches, the responsibility of the ministry exhibited to view in a light remarkably strong; and the arguments growing out of this fact, carry with them weight of evidence, in proportion to the great and awful responsibility here recognised.

There can be no doubt, that the angels were the ministers of the seven Asiatic churches—called *angels*, as being the *messen-*
gers of Christ. And because they were charged with the government of the churches, they were held responsible for the spiritual condition of those over whom they exercised authority. Two of these churches, Smyrna and Philadelphia, were in a prosperous state; and the ministers of these received the divine approbation. But the others were found, more or less, defective in faith, or corrupted in

practice ; in consequence of which Christ signified his displeasure against their pastors.

Now nothing can be more certain, than that the government of these churches had been committed to these angels or ministers. This is necessarily presupposed by their responsibility. No minister can have absolute control over the souls of men, so as to convert them, and preserve them in a state of grace, according to the pleasure of his own will. But having the government of the church, he may preserve it from corruption by the administration of discipline. He may expel from it those who depart from Christianity, either in faith or practice. Therefore, it is reasonable that he should be made responsible for its spiritual condition no further than he possesses authority to administer discipline.

It would be extremely unreasonable to condemn a man for the corrupt state of a church, if the government of it were not in his hands. Therefore, as nothing unreasonable can proceed from the Divine Being, it is evident that these ministers were charged with the government of the seven Asiatic churches.

The force of the arguments arising from these matters of fact, is sufficient, without any other considerations, to silence every objection which can be brought against the doctrine in question. This important truth should be kept in remembrance.

In concluding this letter, I shall draw a few inferences. If the doctrine of the *divine appointment and consecration of the ministry, under the immediate and supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit*, is true, then all who are found in holy orders without this appointment and consecration, are destitute of authority to preach the word of God, and to administer discipline in the church of Christ. As the Holy Ghost has not made them overseers over the flock, they are not the true shepherds of the people of God.

It is daring impiety to assume the ministerial office, to attempt to preach and administer discipline, without being called by the Holy Spirit to this work. If we *enter not* in by the door, by Christ, and the consecration of his Spirit, *we become thieves and robbers*. By *entering into the sheepfold some other way*, we attempt to *steal* an office, of all others the

most important and sacred; we attempt to rob the Holy Spirit of the glory of preparing his ministers for the great work of their mission.

Meditate upon these things.

I am yours, in the bond
of the consecrating Spirit,
W———— B————.

LETTER VII.

THE LEADING PRINCIPLE IN THE GOVERNMENT OF OUR CHURCH, IN REFERENCE TO THE MINISTRY, IS THE ITINERANCY — THE PRIMITIVE MINISTERS WERE ITINERANT.

My Dear Brother,

Among the peculiarities of Methodism, a Travelling ministry is one of the most prominent. This forms a strong mark of distinction, by which we are far removed from other churches; and by the influence of which, we are put into possession of advantages nowhere else realized.

The most cursory review of the discipline will discover to us, that the strongest principle in our government, is that of the Itinerancy. Every part has a direct bearing upon this, and is intended for its conservation. The great object, everywhere apparent in our government, is the preservation of the Travel-

ling connexion, in purity and permanency, for the promotion of the interests of the church, and the glory of God.

This is not less apparent from the history of Methodism. It had its origin in a Travelling ministry ; and throughout its continuance and glorious progress, it has depended on this ministry for support, for means of defence, and for a healthful and vigorous state in the internal matters of the church. Our fathers in the gospel have ever kept a watchful and ardent eye upon the Itinerant connexion, in order to preserve it from the influence of debilitating and destructive principles, and to give it that consistency and firmness, by which it might be sustained under the shocks of time, and go down to succeeding ages in all its glory and happy tendencies. All the great movements of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in reference to internal proceedings, have had a direct or indirect bearing upon the principle of the Itinerancy ; for these fathers of ours, the friends of this principle, have laboured with great care and diligence for its preservation. They have manifested great zeal, firmness, and courage,

in guarding the Itinerancy, by preventing the introduction of heterogeneous principles into the government of our church.

Innovation has been frequently attempted; and the designs of the innovators have been as often frustrated. For nothing, to a true Methodist well acquainted with the principles of our government, is more dreaded than innovation; because he knows, from the structure of the government, that it will bear no radical change, without suffering from it the *debility*, *decay*, and *dissolution* of the Travelling connexion.

The government, as it is now constructed, throws a bulwark of great strength around the Itinerancy; and while it continues in the exercise of its present powers, it will keep the connexion in a healthful condition; and thereby the principle of vitality will be preserved in the body at large.

The superstructure of Methodism, which, in reference to its principles of government, has been reared with so much labour and wisdom, is not a heterogeneous mass of disjointed materials; but a well constructed edifice, its stones being correctly hewed, and nicely pol-

ished, and strongly cemented together upon a foundation broad and firm. But it must be remembered, that it is our charge to see that no injury is done to this foundation. The *innovating* bar, raised to break one of the stones, or remove the least part thereof, must be dashed into shivers with an indignant hand. Keep this in mind. If *repair* is mentioned, expect ruin ; if *reform*, look for destruction. Some of the foundation stones may not please a brother. Their dull appearance may not suit his fine eye ; and he may wish to remove them, to introduce more brilliant materials—but incapable of pressure, and of rapid decay. Be upon your guard. Lift the sword of truth, and forbid the razure. Though he be a brother, no matter ; he must desist.—Remember this charge, as coming from one whose locks silver his brows.

The Itinerancy is all-important to the continuance of Methodism ; and every radical principle of our government is no less important, because it is necessary to the preservation of the Itinerancy. This will be more fully illustrated, in subsequent communications.

I have said in a former letter, “ Methodism

is primitive Christianity revived ;” and the strong light in which I have placed the Itinerancy in this paper, is full of corresponding sentiment. My justification, in respect to these views, will be referred to the strong resemblance existing between the Methodist ministry and the ministry of the primitive church.

It is well known, or at least it ought to be well known, that the first ministers of the gospel were Itinerant.

The Son of God was sent a missionary into our world, charged with unsearchable riches of *grace* for men ; and consequently he came on principles *above* nature. The transactions of his life corresponded with these principles. They had reference to higher motives than those of mortals ; and therefore did not consult the counsel of human wisdom.

Had this wisdom been consulted, in reference to performing his mission in our world, it would have invested him with regal authority, and surrounded him with worldly pomp and glory. In the midst of a magnificent palace, upon a throne of majesty, lofty and richly adorned, it would have placed this

mighty missionary from God. There his negotiations must have been conducted; and all who would have made peace with heaven, must have appeared before him for that purpose. How different was the plan of infinite wisdom! When Jesus commenced his public ministry, *he became* A TRAVELLING PREACHER.

He went about doing good. He travelled continually from city to city, from town to town, from village to village, in order to preach the gospel of his kingdom. And thus he continued, throughout the whole of his public ministry, to set us an example. Who will follow it?

The Apostles were willing to follow this example. For the sake of their heavenly master, they forsook *houses and lands, and brethren and sisters, and fathers and mothers, and wives and children*; going forth cheerfully to preach the gospel; *approving themselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watching, in fasting.* They went forth, preaching everywhere the gospel of the kingdom; for the great Head of the church had said unto

them, just before his ascension into glory,
 “Go into all the world, and preach the gospel
 unto every creature.”

The first ministers of the gospel, in obedience to this command, and in imitation of the example of their glorious Master, lived an Itinerant life ; travelling from place to place, from city to city, from country to country, to “teach all nations, and baptize them, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” And this they continued to do, amidst great distress, and severe persecutions. For St. Paul says unto the Corinthians, respecting the ministers of his time ; “Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, *and have no certain dwelling-place.*”

Is there one word in the New Testament, from which any thing can be inferred in favour of a settled ministry ? I think there is not. The whole of this sacred Book breathes the spirit of Itinerancy ; and all the transactions recorded in it, in reference to the ministry, agree with this spirit.

That the continuance of a Travelling ministry, through all ages of the world, accords

with the divine will, is manifest from the promise, with which Christ closes his last address to the ministers of his word. "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations"—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." The *command* implies a Travelling ministry—and the *promise*, the continuance of it unto the end of the world.

It is true, particular ministers had charge of particular churches. But this will afford no objection against the doctrine here advocated; for whether this charge continued during the life of a minister, or was limited to some short time, it will not follow that he was settled over some particular congregation. It is probable, that the charge was limited in reference to time; for we find the Apostles, particularly Paul, frequently sending ministers from place to place. It is highly probable, that some, at least, of the primitive ministers had charge of several Christian societies, and that they visited them from time to time, in order to administer to them the word of God, the holy ordinances, and the discipline of the Christian church.

That several ages after the Apostolic, the

Christian church had, generally, a settled ministry, no one will call in question. But this will argue nothing in favour of such a ministry, unless it could be proved that this establishment was by order of the Apostles. However, such proof is not to be had.

It is well known, that even in the days of the Apostles, corruptions in doctrine, and innovations in discipline, began to take place. The Corinthians become basely slack in the administration of discipline, and were sharply reproved by St. Paul; who, though absent, expelled from the church the delinquent person. And St. John strongly intimates, that innovation had been introduced into the church, by the usurpation of Diotrephes—"I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth not us. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds, which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church."

It is very probable, that Diotrephes had attempted the settlement of himself over the

church where he resided, as an independent minister. It is, indeed, certain, that he had introduced innovation into the government; that he had thrown off the authority of the Apostles; that he had refused to receive the brethren, the ministerial brethren, whom the Apostle, probably, had sent to correct his errors; and that he had cast out of the church those who were willing to receive them, and submit to their authority as the messengers of the Apostle.

These early innovations and corruptions soon grew strong and became prevalent; and no wonder that, under their influence, the Travelling ministry of primitive Christianity gave place to a settled one; especially when we reflect that there is a natural tendency to such a state of things.

The Apostle Paul appears, in one of his predictions relative to the corruptions of the church, to refer especially to this event. He says to Timothy, in urging upon him faithfulness in the discharge of his ministerial duties: "For the time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts *shall they heap to themselves teachers, hav-*

ing itching ears: And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

This language, *they shall heap to themselves teachers*, is strongly expressive of a settled ministry, *appointed and consecrated* by human authority; such a ministry as has long been the curse of the Christian world. *They shall heap*—multiply ministers, usurping the divine prerogative of constituting the ministry. *To themselves*—for their own purposes. *After their own lusts*—they shall make such ministers as would be indulgent to their corrupt desires, and calculated to gratify their vain curiosity; *having itching ears*—diseased with a strong fondness for novelty and innovation; and filling their sermons, not with *sound doctrine*, but with bold absurd figures, strokes of wit, extravagant flights of fancy, and monstrous *fables*, drawn from the heathen mythology; all recommended by the harmony of their musical voices, and the beauty of their eloquence.

They shall heap to themselves—The primitive Christians did not *make* their own ministers, but they *received* them as they *were sent*

unto them by the ministerial authority of the church. But when the time came, that they would no longer *endure sound doctrine*, then the *making* and *settling* of ministers became a business of great speculation. Shall the Methodist Episcopal Church ever sink into this fatal error? May God forbid it. Amen.

I am yours, affectionately,
in the bonds of the Itinerancy,
W———— B————.

LETTER VIII.

THE SUPERIOR ADVANTAGES OF A TRAVELLING MINISTRY
OVER A SETTLED ONE.

My Dear Brother,

I remarked, in the commencement of my last letter, that, “by the influence of a Travelling ministry, we are put into possession of advantages nowhere else realized.” It is now necessary to prove and illustrate this position.

In that remarkable resemblance of the Travelling connexion to the ministry of the primitive church, noticed in my last communication, we behold our ministry as having an *aspect full of promise*. We anticipate results of vast importance to the happiness of man, as arising from the successful operation of our present PLAN of ecclesiastical government.

We are not vainly fanciful, I presume, in these expectations. For it will be found upon examination, that there is nothing so well calculated, as the Itinerant connexion, to give effect to the preaching of the gospel. This wonderful machine, so simple in structure, so energetic in operation, so certain in effect, will, *if preserved unimpaired*, one day astonish the world, by the glorious results arising from it.

Our views of this subject do not spring from a heated imagination; but are formed in legitimate inductions, drawn from principles of truth, and from matters of fact.

They are drawn from matters of fact. The astonishing effect produced by the preaching of the gospel, in the first age of Christianity, warrants our conclusion, on the ground of that striking likeness which exists between the Itinerant connexion and the ministry of the primitive church. This is corroborated by matters of fact nearer at hand. What the Travelling connexion has already done, is a sure pledge of the accomplishment of what remains to be done—*if this connexion be preserved in original purity and vigour.*

The legitimate inductions on which our expectations are founded, *are also drawn from principles of truth*,—from the nature of things. This part of the subject is worthy of a more particular consideration.

It is worthy of remark, that the Travelling preacher, by the manner of his life, is forcibly pressed to seek a large portion of the Spirit of his Master. The labours and toils which he must sustain, the privations and sufferings which he must endure, in order to form and perfect his character, and accomplish his glorious career, will demand a high degree of spiritual life, and render him proportionably dead to the world.

He must rise high in heavenly dignity of soul, and, overlooking the little concerns of time, he must fix an ardent eye on immortality and glory. He must burn with zeal for the good of man, and for the glory of God.

Rushing into the field of action prepared to endure hardness as a good soldier, he must rejoice to meet the toils and dangers of war. He should possess resources of mind, unfolding as difficulties multiply; unyielding fortitude must arm his soul, and courage increasing

with the increase of danger. Without these gifts and graces, at least in some good degree, we cannot succeed as Travelling ministers.

Such a minister as here described, will be ready to adopt the language of the Itinerant Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: For whom I have suffered the loss of all things." "*I am* troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

And here let it be observed, that in that proportion a preacher is dead to the world, and alive to God, he is calculated to be useful to others. The exemplification of godliness, which such a minister gives in the conduct of his life, while it forms the strong traits of excellence in his own character, is one of the best comments on the gospel. His preaching, enforced by the power of example in a life of self-denial, becomes more successful than it would be without this power, although his tongue were clothed with the eloquence of Gabriel.

For the Itinerant minister, crucified himself to the world by the manner of his life, is enabled to show, in stronger light, the necessity and excellence of spiritual crucifixion, in all professors of religion. By exemplification in his own life, he places the tone of moral and religious feeling high ; and by his personal influence, he draws up his hearers to sit with Christ in heavenly places.

We have an aptitude to forget the peculiar genius of our religion—a genius in direct opposition to the principles of nature. The whole work of grace upon the soul, is not only predicated on principles above nature, in the redemption which is in Jesus, but is an entire subversion of all the natural inclinations and dispositions of the human heart. And for this reason, the Itinerant preacher, having always an opportunity of mortification, has peculiar advantages, in reference to the accomplishment of the work of grace in himself ; and in proportion as he becomes more holy, he is the better prepared to impart, as an instrument, the spirit of holiness to others. There can be no doubt, that the more a minister dwells in God, and God in him, the better he

is fitted to administer the word, and the ordinances of the church.

If we consider this subject in reference to contrast, the great advantages of a Traveling ministry will be strongly illustrated to our view. In proportion as *settled* life, in comparison with an Itinerant one, affords more abundantly the means of gratifying the love of ease and self-indulgence, it is calculated to lower down that high tone of moral rectitude, that nervous inflexibility of virtue, which the minister of Christ ought to possess. As it offers more inducements to seek riches, and honours, and worldly enjoyments, it has a greater tendency to sensualize the soul, to darken the understanding, and to obscure the visions of faith—to diminish the sense of obligation, to destroy the consciousness of responsibility, to cool the ardour, and decrease the diligence of the minister, in the great work of evangelizing the world.

The great disadvantages of a preacher in such a condition, must be manifest to all. It is impossible for him to preach with such success as he would do, were his circum-

stances more favourable to his work in the ministry.

But there is another view, which will present, in strong light, the disadvantages of a *settled* ministry. “A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.” This language of the Redeemer should not be forgotten. It contains a great truth, exemplified everywhere in the Christian world. How holy soever a preacher may be, it will be impossible for him, when long resident in a place, to preserve his ministerial influence *unimpaired*. Many things contribute to the weakening of his influence. The circumstances of birth and education, with the peculiarities of situation and connexions in life, must affect, to a very great degree, his standing in society; and this effect, in general, will be unfavourable to the work of the ministry. The *settled* minister may expect that it will be said of him as it was of his Master: “Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not with us? *Where then hath this man these things?*” What took place

in reference to Jesus, he may expect will take place in regard to himself: “*And they were offended in him.*” “*And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.*”

Besides, that familiarity with the people, which almost unavoidably will become excessive under the circumstance of long residence in one place, and perhaps, some moments of too great relaxation in reference to that rigid regard to dignified deportment, so essentially necessary to the character of a minister, must, unless he be more than what commonly belongs to humanity, *lower him down* in the estimation of the public mind. This thought, I am afraid, is not sufficiently regarded by clerical men, as well of the Itinerant, as of the *settled* order. Few properly weigh it, and exactly estimate its value. When once a minister *descends* from that character of dignity, with which his office invests him, or, in order to avoid *descending*, puts on a studied *reserve*, approaching the appearance of pride and arrogance, his usefulness draws to an end. The sacred functions in his hands lose their sanctifying influence.

Once more. Mankind are accustomed to view objects through the highly discoloured mediums of their own prejudices and passions, and hence they give dreadful distortions to almost everything that passes in review before them. When the angry passions have been awakened, by the faithful reproofs of a minister, or by his administrations of discipline, they will lead their subjects to place his character in a very unfair light, to arraign his conduct, and even to call in question the purity of his intention. The disadvantages under which a *settled* minister must labour, in reference to the operation of such causes, can neither be few nor small.

Moreover, it ought not to be forgotten, that a consciousness of such disadvantages, with a desire to avoid giving offence, may frequently tempt such a minister to neglect his duty. If the temptation should prevail, his ministry will become a curse to the church.

The Travelling preacher, delivered, at least in a very great degree, from the numerous and grievous disadvantages attending a *settled* ministry, goes cheerfully forth in the work of

God, rejoicing to see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hands.

But there is another source, from which the Itinerant connexion derives peculiar advantages. This must not be passed over in silence. The Travelling connexion is adapted, in a remarkable manner, to draw advantage from some of the peculiar principles of human nature.

That principle in man, which is always charmed with novelty, is ever enlisted on the side of the Itinerant preacher. It is a matter of notoriety, that he never fails to command the attention of his audience—even an audience that would regard with indifference the best discourse, delivered by a man whom they had been accustomed to hear.

Truth, indeed, is immutable in its nature ; and in this respect is never new. But such is the great diversity of its habiliments, and such the astonishing power of association of thought in the human mind, that the plainest truth is capable of almost endless variety in representation. Every man has a vast number of peculiarities about him ; not only in his person, but also in his mode of thinking, and

in his manner of communicating his thoughts. These all are calculated to arrest and fix the attention, when the speaker is a stranger ; and they often become powerful auxiliaries of the truth, by enabling it to find way to the heart of man.

It will be readily admitted, that curiosity may become vain ; and, being indulged to excess, may be attended with very pernicious consequences. But that we ought not to avail ourselves of its influence over the minds of man, in order to effect his salvation, is a position which can never be rationally admitted.

The Itinerant preacher avails himself of this powerful auxiliary ; and always enjoys the advantage of its influence—because, as a preacher, he never becomes old. While men of the greatest talents of oratory, after being *settled* a while, lose the power of fixing the attention of their congregations, he is always in possession of this power, although his talents may not be great.

But another consideration, of great weight, demands our regard. There is one thing

which affords more peculiar advantage, to the Itinerant minister, than any of those which have yet passed in review before us.

One of the great principles of Christianity, bearing immediately on this subject, is, that the divine unction must attend the administration of the word, in order to render it successful. Without this unction, we preach in vain. Now it may be laid down as a general rule, that this unction is given, in proportion to the faith with which we preach. It is not sufficient, that we have faith in the truth of our doctrines. We should also believe, that they will be impressed upon the hearts of our hearers with divine power. Under the influence of such faith we shall preach with greater ardour, and usually with proportionate success—because our administrations will be attended with the unction of the Holy Ghost.

But can the minister, who being *settled*, has long preached to the same persons without effecting their conversion, have much faith in reference to their salvation? It is hardly probable. It is far more likely, that he will labour under the awful impression that the

gospel, as it drops from his lips, will become to them *the savour of death unto death*. From this unpleasant situation, this fearful task, the Itinerant preacher is happily delivered. The congregations to whom he preaches, however hardened they may be, have not been hardened under his ministry; and, therefore, he is left in the full exercise of faith for their salvation. He preaches with faith, with fervour, with power, and with success. If I am not mistaken, this is one of the greatest advantages which the Travelling preacher possesses; and to this, perhaps, more than any one thing else, is to be attributed the astonishing success with which the administrations of the Itinerant connexion have been attended.

I know, indeed, my dear brother, that the doctrine of a *divine unction* has been called in question—excluded from some systems of divinity—smiled at, as the dream of enthusiastical minds. And I also know, that some who believe this doctrine, too often preach without sufficient dependence upon this unction, as the *only cause* of success.

We ought to place it high on the scale of religious truths. It should be the object of our

prayers in the closet, and the *life* of our sermons from the pulpit.

I am, in the bonds of brotherly love, under the happy influence of an Itinerant ministry, affectionately yours,

W——— B———.

LETTER IX.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

My Dear Brother,

The superiority of a Travelling ministry over a *settled* one, in relation to doing good, must always make it an object of high interest to all who understand its nature, and wish well to the cause of Christ. The view we have already taken of this subject, in reference to numerous points in which this superiority is manifest, is sufficient to justify this conclusion ; and, no doubt, it has placed the Itinerant connexion high in your estimation, and produced in your heart a strong and permanent attachment for that ministry for which you are a candidate.

In this view we have contemplated Itinerant preachers, as arising from the circumstances in which they are placed, into a

higher region of spiritual life, imbibing more of the mind that was in Christ, and diffusing its happy influence around them, in all the transactions of life. We have seen them from the relations they bear to the church and the world, enabled under the influence of the Holy Ghost to bring within their control so many of the great springs of action, as to possess uncommon ascendancy over the minds of their audience. But we have beheld them, chiefly, as individually and separately at work in the great field of their labours ; and, therefore, we have seen but a small part of the benefit which the church derives from the Travelling connexion.

We must take another view of this subject. The benefits which result to the church from an Itinerant ministry, considered as arising from the separate labours of each individual preacher, how great soever, will yet be found to be inconsiderable, when compared with those which our church derives from the *co-operation* of her ministry. It is in this *co-operation* especially, that the great superiority of the Travelling connexion lies.

Diversity of operation is remarkable in the economy of nature ; nor is it less remarkable

in the economy of grace. As far as we can judge, the latter answers to the former ; and in order to suit the dispensations of grace to the manifold conditions and circumstances of human nature, the Redeemer of the world has so far diversified the ministrations of the Spirit, as to give every man suitable grace, and every minister such gifts, as qualify him for his particular work in the edification of the church.

For when the Son of God “led captivity captive,” “in spoiling the powers of darkness,” “he ascended up on high to receive gifts for men.” Having received the kingdom from the Father, *he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ ; till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*

That such a number of officers, possessed with diversity of talents, as here described, is necessary for the work of the ministry, should not be called in question. For human nature, considered in its different subjects, presents a

diversity almost boundless ; and to meet this, to suit every individual case, and every particular circumstance, it was necessary to give a great variety of talents in the gospel ministry.

Now it is manifest, that the Travelling connexion brings this variety to bear, with great effect, upon the people of its charge. No method can be adopted, which would have the same salutary, extensive, and permanent effect, as a *united* Travelling ministry. Such a ministry is ours ; and the history of Methodism will evince, that the *co-operation* of our Travelling preachers, in that succession in which they follow each other, has realized, to a very great extent, the glorious object proposed, in the *diversified administrations* of the Spirit.

We see one man, set for the defence of the gospel, armed with astonishing powers of argument. Another, who is sent to awaken the consciences of sinners, is clothed with the terrors of the law. A third, designed to comfort mourners, is invested with the charms of mercy ; his tongue is dipped in the oil of pity ; his words seem to melt, and drop as sweet as the breath of heaven. A fourth, commissioned

to guard the rights of the divine law, is qualified to preach, and press with power, the necessity of holiness in heart and life. A fifth, designated for the administration of discipline, possesses, in a high degree, the talent of government.

Now each of these ministers may be able to perform, after some manner, these several parts of the work of the ministry; but no one will be capable of working with much effect, except in that part for which his talents peculiarly qualify him.

Settle, if you please, any one of these ministers over a particular congregation. Confine this people to his ministry alone. Now, is it possible that they can enjoy, under such circumstances, all the advantages which the gospel ministry is designed to communicate? Certainly, it is not possible. They will be left destitute of the influence of all those “differences of administrations,” those “diversities of operations,” which are not included in his own peculiar talents. In what condition must such a people be? under circumstances of such *want*, such *famine* of the word of God, can anything be expected but

spiritual death and desolation? Must not all the vital interests of godliness be in a desperate state?

In answer to these questions, if it would not be thought invidious, I would merely point to surrounding churches, with *settled* ministers, who profess to be called of the Holy Ghost to preach the gospel. Matters of fact awfully demonstrate my doctrine.

From this fearful condition the Methodist Episcopal Church is happily delivered, by enjoying the advantages of an Itinerant ministry. This ministry, circulating in regular succession, imparts to every portion of the church, abundantly, those benefits which result from the influence of a "diversity of gifts." Moving in perfect order, every minister is engaged in the performance of his own work, while he is preparing the way for the accomplishment of the work of his successor. United in design, and harmonious in operation, they build up the church of God in faith and good works. They nourish the sons of grace with the good word of life, "until they come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure

of the stature of the fulness of Christ." For their combined influence, brought to bear on one object, "the perfecting of the saints," accomplishes "the work of the ministry," in "the edification of the body of Christ."

This body of ministers, by being united under *one head* in the Episcopacy, is preserved in order, in unity of design and operation, and made an object of terror to "the armies of the aliens." As a mighty host of veterans, it rushes with the impetuosity of a torrent upon the powers of darkness. Its arm, made terrible by the demonstration of the Spirit, "casts down the strong-holds" of error and corruption; while the shout of triumph, *like the voice of many waters*, reverberates through all the camps of Israel.

Preserve the Itinerant connexion in *purity*, in *unity*, and in *strength*; and what will it not be able to do? There is nothing wanting, in my opinion, but this *preservation*, to enable it to accomplish the utmost object of its wishes—to place within the grasp of its power the *evangelization* of the world.

But O! my God, thine arm only can preserve it. Wilt thou be the shield of this con-

nexion? Or hast thou written its fate in thy Holy Book? If it please Thee, *look down from Heaven, and behold and visit this vine, which thy hand hath planted, and the branch that thou hast made strong for thyself. For the boar out of the wood would waste it, and the wild beast of the field would devour it. Cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved. Turn the edge of every sword which may be lifted against this connexion. Say unto it: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."* Amen, and Amen.

You will unite with me in this petition. Much may be effected by *the prayer of faith*. However, this must be accompanied with *works*. Our influence and talents must be taxed to support the great cause, in which interests so dear to us are involved. They must be called forth in defence of the principles of our government.

I am, in the bonds of the gospel, preached with so much success by the Itinerant connexion, yours affectionately,

W——— B———.

LETTER X.

THERE IS A NATURAL TENDENCY TO A SETTLED MINISTRY—OUR GOVERNMENT FRAMED WITH A SPECIAL VIEW TO COUNTERACT THIS TENDENCY.

My Dear Brother,

The *preservation* of the Travelling connexion should be an object of great solicitude with every Methodist, and in particular, with every Methodist preacher. For the welfare of our church depends, under God, upon this preservation; which, in consequence of the operation of many causes, will be found a matter of no small difficulty.

That considerable difficulty is attached to the preservation of our Travelling ministry, admits of no doubt—for the natural tendency of human nature, and of everything connected with it in the present state of the world, is against the Itinerancy. This thought, while

it passes a high encomium upon our ministry as rising above this tendency, presents nothing strange to our view. For corrupt nature, wherever it exists, either in ministers or people, maintains at all times, and under all circumstances, a permanent counteraction to the principles of grace ; one of which, as we have already seen, is that of the Itinerancy. And it is a very sad thought, but no less true than sad, that this counteraction controls, to a dreadful extent, a large portion of those who are invested with ministerial robes. The influence of their example bears directly against the course of the Travelling preacher, and presents no small obstacle in his way.

Redemption, as well in the means it employs to effect its great purposes, as in the principles on which it is founded, is above nature, and in direct opposition to *nature* in man. And hence, a Travelling ministry, the great means of effecting these *purposes*, must bear in its very character a strong contrariety to all the corrupt principles of human society—must rise above the world and the things of the world, to live under the influence of the dignified principles of redemption. Will this

require no exertion? Will it meet with no repugnance in man?

It is true, this presents the Travelling preacher to view, in a strong light of recommendation; but even this light, by the very operation which places his praise with so much brilliance before us, discovers the ground of a natural tendency to a *settled* ministry.

The tendency to *such* a condition in the ministry, is strong and permanent. Various causes of fluctuating character, or opposite tendency, arising from difference of relation or circumstance, may diminish or increase this tendency. But while the corruption of human nature remains, *opposition* to an Itinerant ministry will be supported by permanent causes, operating with great energy, and without interruption, and with certain effect, unless counteracted by supernatural influence.

If we take a closer view of this subject, we shall find these causes to exist, in the natural *inclinations* and *aversions* of the heart of man. Mankind delight in ease and self-indulgence. These are usually found, in a greater or less degree, in *fixed* situations. Here a thousand allurements arise from the wide range of so-

cial life, to tempt the *missionary* to terminate his Itinerant career; while a thousand more press upon him from a view of *settled* life, as having avenues to worldly pleasures, wealth, and aggrandizement, abundantly more direct. On the other hand, privations, toils, and sufferings, are the constant companions of his Itinerant life. They meet him at every step, to cool his ardour, to wear out his patience, to break down the vigour of his spirit, and to waste the energies of his soul.

I do not magnify the strength of this tendency. It can hardly be drawn with colours too strong. Only bold strokes of the pencil can give the portrait a correct resemblance to the original.

We ought to view this tendency with a watchful eye—and never more so, than when we discover a desire to remove the great landmarks which *define* and *secure* the powers of the executive department of our government. For these raise strong barriers against this tendency, and go to effect, in a very great degree, the preservation of the Itinerancy.

For it is to be remembered, that our government was framed with a special view to

counteract this tendency to a *settled* ministry. The most cursory review of its leading principles, will be sufficient to convince us of this fact. This consideration should inspire us with stronger attachment to it; we should love it the more, and defend it with greater zeal—*for this is the strongest trait of its excellence.*

That the great founders of our church, the venerable Wesley, Coke, and Asbury, were deeply sensible of the tendency under consideration, is undeniable, from the strong bulwark which they raised around the Itinerancy, in the structure of the government. Or shall I rather say, that under a deep impression of its fatal influence, and with a special view to counteract its operation, they formed our government, as near as possible, according to the principles of the New Testament; and that therefore they received it, indirectly, from the great Head of the church, the whole of whose system of religion is in direct opposition to fallen nature?

The view which we have taken of this subject, should not damp your ardour in the prosecution of your studies, as a candidate for

our ministry. For in proportion to the difficulties with which you may be surrounded, will be the beauty and the number of the laurels you will gather. According to the strength of the torrent of opposition which you may be called to stem, will be the reward with which you will be crowned. And according to the might and bravery of the enemies you overthrow in battle, will be the glory with which your character will be emblazoned—a glory, not like the fading glory of the statesman, or hero of the world; but a glory, which will live and shine through the ages of eternity—a glory coming from God, and worthy of an immortal mind.

Nothing, indeed, is more evident than that the Travelling preacher of the Methodist church needs a large portion of grace, to qualify him for the discharge of his duties, and the *successful* accomplishment of his work. He should enter the field of action in possession of courage that fears no danger, and of fortitude that becomes more unyielding with the increase of the pressure of affliction. He should have that self-possession which remains perfectly cool and collected in the

midst of all the turmoils of human life. He should enjoy that wisdom which is from above—not less in goodness, than in resources in the times of necessity. In a word, he should put on the whole armour of God—always remembering that his arm is made strong, only by the *demonstration of the Spirit*.

In reference to the danger attending the Itinerancy, in consequence of the strong tendency to a *settled* ministry, we have the following consideration for our encouragement. The government of the Methodist Episcopal church has remained unto the present time. It has endured, for forty years, great oppositions from without, and more powerful shocks from within, without suffering any serious injury. No effectual impression has been made upon it. It is still *sound and whole*.

This affords strong evidence, that it is not composed of materials subject to rapid decay. They must be of a permanent nature, full of strength and durability—and so well put together, as to render the whole superstructure capable of *mighty resistance*.

Besides, “God is with us.” He is our

rock, our salvation, and our defence. And who shall make us afraid?

Under a high sense of gratitude to God, for mercies conferred upon me, in the Methodist Episcopal Church, I remain yours affectionately,

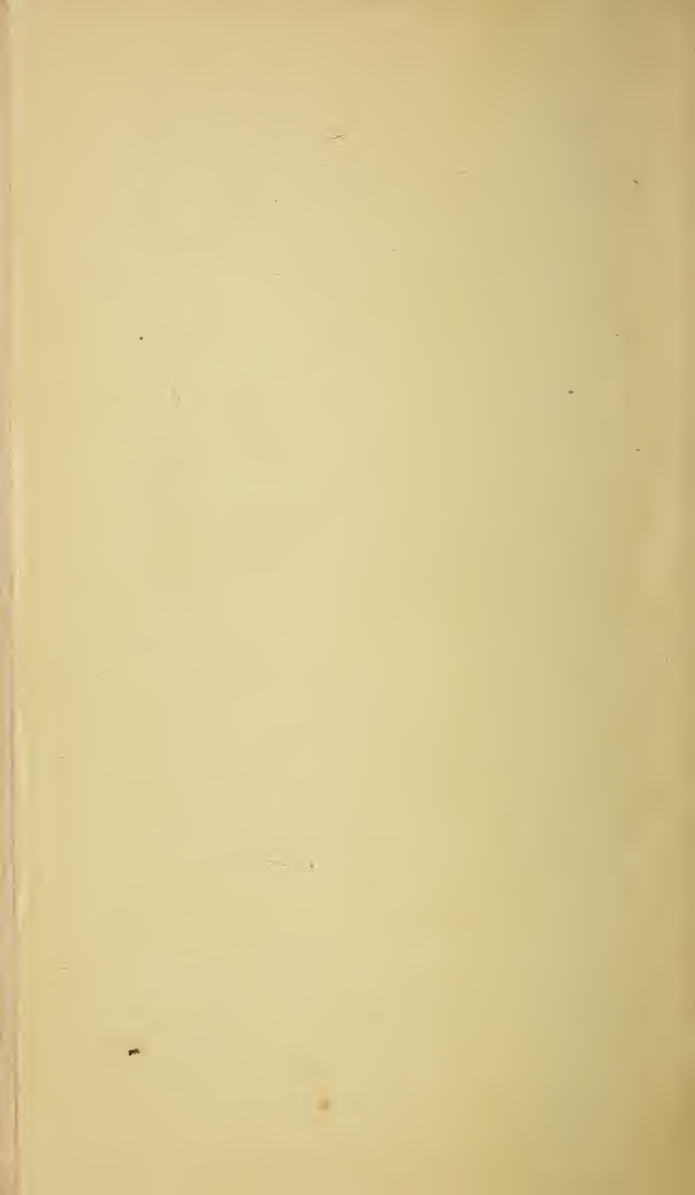
W—— B——.

THE END.









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